Twitter Thread by David McRaney



David McRaney
@davidmcraney

Polls show 2/3 of Republicans believe the insurrection was a false flag operation, which is psychologically no different than believing the Earth is flat or that highly evolved dinosaurs who survived the asteroid now control world governments from a secret base on the moon. 1/10

Humans are motivated reasoners, and all conspiracy theories begin with a motivation stronger than the pursuit of accuracy (often a fear of authority or sense of powerlessness), in this case, the motivation is to assuage cognitive dissonance in service of reputation management. 2/

The events at the Capitol formed two competing attitudes in the brains of many Republicans: [It is good to be a Trump supporter]/ [Trump supporters seem like bad people.] That dissonance can be assuaged by simply believing that the people who did this aren't Trump supporters. 3/

Once committed to a dissonance-reducing causal narrative, one gets trapped in The Conspiratorial Loop -- all evidence to the contrary is part of the conspiracy, and any lack of evidence is part of a coverup. There is no bottom-up escape, only top-down via metacognition. 4/10

The good news it that you can encourage that metacognition in others. The most important thing is to avoid facts, abstractions, and conclusions. Focus on the other person’s processing instead. In psychology they call it “technique rebuttal” as opposed to “topic rebuttal." 5/10

The best methods for technique rebuttal (deep canvassing, street epistemology, motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioral therapy, smart politics, the Socratic method) all follow roughly the same routine: 6/10

1. Establish rapport (no shaming). 2. Ask for a claim. 3. Ask for a measure of confidence in this claim. 4. Ask what reasoning supports this claim. 5. Ask what justifies this reasoning. 6. Then explore if those justifications are strong enough to support that level of confidence.

Sometimes a single conversation will lead to a complete a 180, but more often one conversation slightly reduces or increases confidence in the claim, or shifts an attitude supported by the claim a smidge more positive or negative. 8/10

Don't get frustrated. That still counts as changing a mind, and it encourages active processing and the sort of metacognitive introspection that opens the door to further conversations and change. 9/10

All of this is part of my upcoming book, How Minds Change, which covers a lot more than the psychology of persuasion. Updates on that later this year. In the meantime, you can listen to my podcast hear the experts who told me all these things: https://t.co/m2VnEvjYbq 10/10